

The Basilica of Immaculate Conception  
[www.icjax.org](http://www.icjax.org)

### Peace doesn't just happen, it's made!

"But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for[a] those who make peace." James 3:17-18

Bishop Felipe Estevez invited Fr. Blair Gaynes to become the shepherd of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception Parish in early 2017. He had previously been the pastoral associate at Resurrection and Blessed Trinity Catholic Church and at that time, he relinquished his duties with the diocesan Vocation Office. In July 2017, he assumed the role of Pastor while also using his more than 30 years of experience in Youth & Young Adult ministry, education and social services to continue his ministerial and administrative leadership of Campus Ministry. Fr. Blair, prior to being ordained in 2012, had worked in the Diocese for several years during which he was able to use his gifts as an instructor for teachers and parish catechists religious certification, lead spiritual and formation retreats, as well as being a Spiritual Director.

For Fr. Blair, this scripture passage has been a guiding light since the early years of his conversion. His deeply personal encounters with the Living God became the foundation for unshakeable faith that has been guided by Scripture and aided through the teachings and the living tradition of the Church. He believes that disciples of Christ must be faithful to the essential teachings of the Church, understood and enlivened, through genuine encounters with Christ. That the individual Christian and the Church together must also read the signs of the times and appropriately adapt the message of the Gospel to enable others to encounter Christ, to embrace the 'Universal Call To Holiness'. He believes a parish community must grow in desire and ability to consistently and authentically LIVE the FAITH, LOVE as CHRIST, LEARN the FAITH, and LEAD as CHRIST. That we should be unimpeded in making Christ present through evangelizing actions that are rooted Love of God and inspired by Love of neighbor.



Father  
Blair Gaynes



First United Methodist Church  
[www.firstumcjax.org](http://www.firstumcjax.org)

### Grace in Uncertain Times

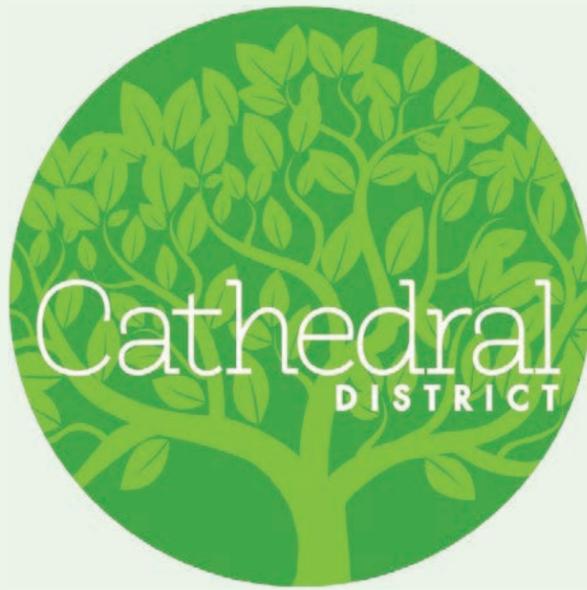
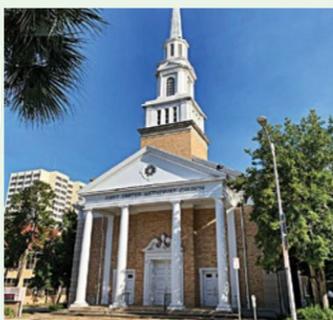
We all love a sense of order and predictability and its comfort, however, crises, chaos, and, yes, just life itself can bring about the most unpredictable circumstances. Circumstances that disrupt our sense of order and control. This can be frightening and disheartening yet, as believers, we are called to live faithfully in such uncertainty.

I am reminded of a moment in early Christian history when things radically changed for all who followed Jesus. This was certainly a time of distress and challenge, to say the least: Jesus had been crucified, buried, and now his body was missing. Life was hard for the disciples struck with grief and uncertainty. According to Luke 24: 13-35, two of them traveled to Emmaus. As they traveled and shared words of grief with one another Jesus joined their journey walking with them. He asked them questions that directed them to spiritual practices that came to shape the lives of all believers. He challenged his disciples to focus on the truth in Scripture rather than circumstances.

Scripture is a reminder of who we are and who our God and Father is. Studying Scripture daily is a comfort in times of uncertainty. When you are confronted with the chaos of life and pandemics in particular and overwhelmed by feelings of grief, loneliness, and pain, you need to remember that Scripture remains the foundation of our hope and our healing. So as you all continue your journey in this unsettling season, remember and seek out the Word of our Lord. Draw near in sacred spaces and prayer, open your eyes, and see the grace of God all around us, for He is with us.



Rev. Tiffany  
McCall



[www.cathedraldistrict-jax.org](http://www.cathedraldistrict-jax.org)

## The Pride of Cathedral District Jacksonville.

The Cathedral District Churches are the Spiritual and Historical Foundation for the City of Jacksonville. The community that we are all so fond of living in comes to us from the courage and the faith of the churches that established our community almost 200 years ago.

After the Great Fire of 1901, all five of these churches immediately began to rebuild. Their congregations and spiritual leaders rolled up their sleeves and used gifts of strength and ingenuity, and the power of the Holy Spirit, to begin again. Each of these five churches in the heart of Downtown Jacksonville have planted close to 100 mission churches and charitable organizations throughout Duval County. This gracious and kind "City of Jacksonville" would not exist without the commitment of our CDJ Churches.

In addition to the ecumenical and charitable services they provide to our city, they give us a heritage to be proud of, a story of perseverance and love. Now they also offer us these magnificent historical architectural structures that represent the foundation in the heart of Downtown Jacksonville. The excellent educational programs for all ages have not ceased, nor have the different choral and instrumental programs offered. We invite you to attend and experience these churches for yourself.

Right now they need your help and support! Please consider donating to one of our CDJ churches, by going to their websites to help sustain the spiritual and historical foundation of our city.

Once again as a community, we face great challenges: the loss of life sustaining jobs; the loss of loved ones; feelings of isolation; fear of the unknown; and the daunting task of change. Let the rebirth commence! Consider now, as we are all doing, how to steward and prioritize your gifts. Please give of your time, talents and money where you are called.

— Linda Crofton, Community Development

St. John's Episcopal Cathedral  
[www.jaxcathedral.org](http://www.jaxcathedral.org)

### Hope

Our lives have been turned upside down in just a few months. We are facing the greatest epidemic of our lifetimes. What will the future hold? Now is a time for hope.

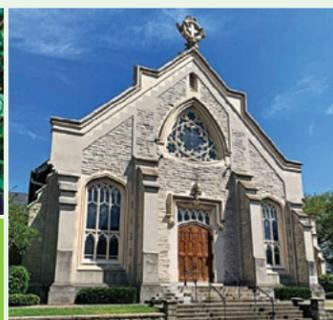
Here in the Cathedral District, we were so excited to welcome over one thousand people to our Christmas in the Cathedral District event. People who had never been inside our historic churches walked in and stood in awe in the face of their beauty.

When the virus hit, we didn't stop. While everyone was locked in their homes, we planted 60 trees. It was a visible sign of the hope that we have in Jesus.

Hope is not something determined by external circumstances. Hope comes from God alone and we will have hope as long as we have life. We hope that we will be able to welcome you again soon to our beautiful historic district and to the churches who worship there.



The Very Rev.  
Kate Moorehead



Historic Mt. Zion AME Church  
[www.hmzjax.org](http://www.hmzjax.org)

### "...By Our Love."

"A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also must love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another." John 14:34-35 NIV

We are Historic Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church. Moved by God to love humankind as family. This narrative serves as a link to our past, and a bridge to our future for we are bond by Christ Spirit to Love our neighbor as Christ loves.

As an African born in America during the inception of the Civil Rights Movement, my parents raised my four siblings and me on the principle that God is Love. It is God's love that drives my pastoral and community ministry.

As I witness the resurgence of hate crimes and the divisiveness within our nation, fueled by fear and ignorance especially during the pandemic (Covid-19) health crisis, I often wonder, where is the Love?

In Dr. Martin Luther King's book Strength to Love, "It's difficult for most not to become cynical, vindictive and to retaliate. It's human nature. But, that does not give humankind a License to disrespect, disregard, demoralize the disenfranchised. "Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that."

As I reflect on a recent morning walk with my wife, she reminded me of a timeless hymn "We Are One in the Spirit." A Christian hymn written in the 1960s by then-Catholic priest, the late Fr. Peter Scholtes. It is inspired by John 13:35. The title of the hymn They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love originates in a phrase that non-believers used to describe Christian believers of the early Church: "Behold, how they love one another."

We are Historic Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church. We are in community with the Cathedral District and thus we are Stronger Together.



Rev. Victor  
D. Cole, M. Div.



First Presbyterian Church  
[www.fpcjax.org](http://www.fpcjax.org)

### Peace

There is a famous painting of a stormy sea, dark clouds, large waves and fierce lightning. In the middle of the scene is a large rock with waves crashing against it, and in the middle of the rock is a small cleft. A closer look inside the cleft reveals a grassy patch surrounded by beautiful flowers. And there in the middle of the flowers, amid the violent storm, is a dove sitting calmly on her nest!

Most people long for the peace represented by that dove. But peace seems elusive in a world that is anything but serene, especially in this Covid-19 season.

Jesus once said to His disciples: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27).

Let us learn from the dove in the painting, sitting calmly on her nest as the storm raged. Better yet, let us learn from Jesus and receive His peace. Because of His atoning death on the cross for sinners, we can experience peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). We can also experience abiding peace in an unsettled world as we keep our minds fixed on the Lord (Isaiah 26:3).

Amid the storms of life, may His peace be yours.  
Shalom!



Rev. Dr. Michael  
"Scott" Luckey

